

Chapter 8: Comments and Responses

Introduction

This section contains the responses to the comments received by OPRHP on the Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Hallock State Park Preserve. The Draft Master Plan/DEIS was issued April 28, 2010. A Public Hearing was held May 18, 2010 at the Naugles Barn at the Hallockville Museum Farm in Riverhead, NY. The comment period was scheduled to end June 11, 2010.

During the Public Hearing, thirteen (13) people out of approximately forty spoke and their comments were recorded. During the comment period for the Draft Master Plan/DEIS, the Agency received twenty-seven (27) written comment letters. A list of persons providing comments is included at the end of this chapter.

The types of comments received included document editing suggestions, requests for clarification of information presented in the document, and comments related to specific aspects of the plan. All comments were reviewed and organized by categories. Responses to these comments are found in this section and were considered in the revisions found in this Final Master Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

OPRHP appreciates the time and effort that persons interested in the future of Hallock State Park Preserve have invested in their review and comments on the Draft Master Plan/DIES and their participation in the public hearing.

Response to Comments

This section is organized by category. Following each category heading, there is a summary of the comments received. Following each summarized comment is the response.

General Comments on the Plan and Process

Comment:

A Park Manager's house should not be built when the state is in bad fiscal straights. Instead, the state should try to rent the residence on the Hallockville Museum property for the manager.

Response:

The park manager's residence will be constructed if necessary and funding is available. Ideally, OPRHP would prefer to have the park manager closer to the actual park. The residences at Hallockville may or may not suit the needs for the park manager residence. It was also brought to our attention that there are no vacancies at Hallockville at this time.

Comment:

The plans should include a stoplight (with turn signal) at the corner of Herricks and Sound as an entrance to the park. That light would also help traffic flow in the area especially during the summer. Upgrades and widening of Sound Avenue should also be considered for that area as well for safety.

Response:

A traffic study was conducted during the preparation of the master plan and it was determined that a stoplight would not be warranted at the entrance or exit from the park.

Both Herricks Lane and Sound Avenue fall under the purview of the Town of Riverhead. Any concerns regarding the width or safety of these roads should be addressed to the appropriate entity.

Comment:

Better patrol the property to keep ATVs out of the park.

Response:

ATV use is illegal in all NYS Parks. OPRHP will continue to monitor the park and enforce the law when violators are found; having an on-site presence will aid in such enforcement.

Comment:

How can the development of a nature center, park office and boardwalk be allowed in a Park Preserve? How is that preserving things? Please seriously consider keeping the asphalt to a bare minimum. It's a very small parcel and as much of it as possible should be kept as is.

Response:

Any development at the park will require equipment (bulldozers, etc) to be brought in. Even park preserve law recognizes the need to construct necessary facilities including offices, roads, paths, nature centers, and parking areas on no more than 15% of the preserve. Proposed development is well within the preserve limit. At this time, the park is in a more-wild, natural state and in order to improve access to the interior of the park and develop the trail system, the use of construction equipment is required. The nature center, maintenance and park residence are all proposed in an area that was previously disturbed by previous land owners. OPRHP is committed to developing sustainable facilities; the plan proposes using pervious paving material for the main road and parking areas.

Comment:

The Sound is abundant with wind, it's self-sustaining, and wind energy is not addressed in the master plan and it should be.

Response:

OPRHP is open to utilizing alternative energy sources to supply power to the park. Moreover, the development and operation of the park will be guided by the OPRHP's sustainability plan.

Comment:

The proposed placement of the park's nature center as described in the Draft Master Plan/DEIS does not consider adverse impacts to important ecological features. To reduce adverse ecological impacts to Hallock's Pond, we urge OPRHP to further consider the Alternative One location along Sound Avenue.

Response:

As noted in the plan, several locations were considered for the nature center during the planning process. The proposed location of the nature center was adjusted for the final plan to site the building as far away as possible from Hallock's Pond, while keeping it proximate to expected park activity. Alternative One, on Sound Avenue, does not offer adequate space for the building and required parking. In addition, this location is the farthest from the resources and could potentially present a problem with respect to getting school groups out and into the interior park to experience nature.

Park Operations

Comment:

The state should facilitate access from a single parking lot close to the entrance, in order to keep vehicular noise pollution to a minimum. Surf fishermen, scuba-divers, kayakers, wind-surfers and beach-goers can walk or use electric carts to transit from the parking lot to the beach. The carts can have small trailers for equipment and can be available for a small rental fee if necessary to offset cost of running and maintaining them. Such carts will also facilitate handicapped access.

Response:

Comment noted. Parking areas were considered extensively during the planning process. The main parking lot (near the nature center) will accommodate approximately 76 vehicles. This is the primary parking location for the park. The smaller overlook and accessible lot provides four (4) accessible parking spots for those park patrons who cannot easily access the shore on foot and can be used as a drop-off location for equipment and car-top water craft. The connecting drives serve as maintenance vehicle access to the body of the park as well.

Comment:

The East End Livestock and Horseman's Association would like to be considered as a park partner. Also consider working with local high schools and college students for habitat restoration projects.

Response:

OPRHP would be happy to have the East End Livestock and Horseman's Association as a park partner at Hallock State Park Preserve, along with other organizations. In addition, high school and college students are welcome partners and should apply for a research permit should they wish to conduct research or assist with restoration projects in the park. Information on additional partnerships has been added to Chapter 6.

Comment:

Please address the issue of fly-overs near the park. From Memorial Day through Labor Day helicopters go over in an endless stream back and forth between Connecticut and the South Fork creating excess noise pollution.

Response:

This is beyond the purview of the master plan.

Comment:

The plan shows buildings and parking and may indicate some exterior lighting. All exterior lighting should be dark sky friendly in a preserve. Not only is noise pollution an emerging issue on the North Fork, light pollution is also on the rise. Please help keep light pollution at bay by using the least amount of exterior lighting and using only fully shield lighting and using it only when needed.

Response:

The impacts of ambient lighting will be considered when the nature center, park residence and maintenance area goes through a full design process (all designs presented in the plan are conceptual). OPRHP is cognizant of the effects of ambient lighting on the larger community and will make every effort to keep necessary external lighting to a minimum. Development and light installations will also adhere to the Town of Riverhead's Dark Skies ordinance.

Comment:

Garbage collection should be centralized on the parking lots, not on the beach.

Response:

The plan does not propose having garbage cans on the beach. Garbage collection will be located at the park office/nature center and in the parking areas.

Comment:

The role of law enforcement in the protection of the natural resources of the park is noticeably absent from the draft plan. Law enforcement should be an overarching strategy across all natural resource protection strategies in order to ensure public compliance.

Response:

The State Park Police are the primary law enforcement entity to enforce the rules and regulations of OPRHP including resource protection. As needed, assistance can be provided by other state and local law enforcement agencies. An on-site resident manager can assist in requesting law enforcement when necessary.

Comment:

Allow vehicular access from adjacent beaches pursuant to public trust doctrine.

Response:

The Town of Riverhead allows vehicles on their beach under Chapter 48 of the town code. This code does not apply to State Parkland. Under the public trust doctrine, residents are still allowed to access the beach at Hallock State Park Preserve from the adjacent Riverhead beach, but they may not do so with a motor vehicle or other motorized craft (beach buggy, ATV, etc.).

Natural Resources

Comment:

There are no meaningful environmental issues requiring protection at the property.

Response:

Comment noted. As noted in Chapter 3 of the plan, Natural Heritage Program scientists have identified a rare ecological community within the park and there are federally listed endangered species within the park, as well.

Comment:

For the past few years, a pair of Piping Plovers has nested on the beach. Allowing horses or vehicles on the beach would be counter to state guidelines. Establishing a park presence would be beneficial for these state protected birds, but would also help keep the illegal ATV traffic off the beach and the bluffs.

Response:

OPRHP, with the assistance of other organizations such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife, has taken and will continue to take measures to protect the Piping Plovers. Having a greater park presence on site will improve the protection of Piping Plovers, curtail illegal activities, and control authorized ones.

Comment:

In addition to the protective fencing and signage discussed, the plan should include more specific strategies regarding endangered species management; including ensuring seasonal stewards are deployed by April 1st each season in order to adequately protect early season shorebird nest attempts. The plan should explicitly state native predators will be removed where appropriate, and non-native predatory species, including but not limited to feral cats, will be immediately removed from the park before a colony or large population can become established. Additionally, the issue of ATV/ORV trespass must be adequately addressed, particularly when unfledged chicks are on the beach.

Response:

Comment noted. An endangered species management plan will be developed for the park and has been added to the alternatives discussed in Appendix A as well as the Master Plan in Chapter 6.

Comment:

The invasive species management strategy should address the potential for invasive animal species, particularly feral cats, and as stated above, call for their immediate removal from the park.

Response:

Discussion of wildlife and other animals has been added to Chapters 5 and 6. OPRHP has guidelines in place for feral cat management and these guidelines will be applied to Hallock State Park Preserve in plan implementation.

Invasive species control is approached on a priority basis considering threatened sensitive resources, invasiveness of the species in question, and ease of control which will include consideration of factors such as staffing, access, and permit requirements. Best management practices for control of invasive species in the marsh would be explored during preparation of park-specific invasive species control/removal plans.

Comment:

There should be a stated need to maintain connectivity to adjacent natural communities to allow for migration of the maritime beach. Natural vegetative buffers along the coast should be explicitly maintained in order to effectively accommodate for sea level rise, and preventing detrimental impacts from upland activities.

Additionally, preserving the natural shoreline provides essential habitat not only for federally and state listed nesting shorebirds, but may also provide essential spawning habitat for horseshoe crabs. Horseshoe crabs should be specifically mentioned as a species utilizing the maritime beach.

Response:

As pointed out, the maritime beach is an important ecological feature in the park and is connected physically and ecologically to adjacent properties. Revised management of the maritime beach was not considered during the planning process, since the area was recognized as important to maintain in its natural state. No changes are proposed and no vegetation is proposed to be removed from the beach area. Horseshoe crabs are an important species for maintenance of a healthy beach ecosystem and are being studied elsewhere in Long Island State Parks.

Comment:

In order to adequately protect the park's forest communities, the master plan should contain explicit strategies for controlling the deer population, in furtherance of maintaining the park's high quality

forest communities. The plan should include provisions to monitor forest health, including plant species composition, cover, density, and regeneration at set intervals (5-year, 10-year).

Response:

Comment noted. Deer management and wildlife management are addressed in Chapters 5 and 6 of the plan. As discussed in the plan, OPRHP will work with the Department of Environmental Conservation and other stakeholders in the area to identify and implement a comprehensive, long term approach for deer and wildlife management.

Recreation

Comment:

Cross Country Skiing is not mentioned in the plan. It should be listed as an acceptable activity.

Response:

Comment noted. Cross country skiing will be allowed in the park but the trails will not be groomed.

Comment:

Aluminum car-top boats should be allowed as well as canoes and kayaks.

Response:

All car-top, hand powered water craft are allowed at the Long Island Sound.

Comment:

Windsurfing and kite-boarding should be allowed in the park.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment:

Limiting the use by equestrians to Spring and Fall is too restrictive; allow full equestrian use of the park, including the shoreline area. Allow for shared-use trails for equestrians and hikers.

Response:

All-year equestrian use was considered during the planning process; however, the core planning team felt that given the size and anticipated use of the park that limiting equestrian use to the spring and fall would be appropriate for the park at this time. Once the park is open, OPRHP will monitor year-round attendance for at least two years and will reevaluate whether or not the facility can accommodate year-round equestrian use based on those numbers.

Comment:

Please allow horses on the beach.

Response:

At the time of developing the draft Master Plan, OPRHP considered and included existing uses of the park wherever possible. OPRHP was unaware that riding on the beach is an ongoing activity. Based on the likely low number, OPRHP will continue to allow this activity. OPRHP is developing a regional permit process for horseback riding in parks, and this activity will be subject to permitting.

In this manner, the agency will be able to monitor levels of use. This activity will not be allowed in the park if plovers or terns are present during nesting season. Under the endangered species and beach management strategies, any adverse impacts of this activity will be identified to determine if there is a need to apply additional measures to mitigate impacts of this and other activities.

Comment:

Comments support the proposed plan NOT allowing equestrian access to the beach area due to the sensitive Piping Plover and Least Tern nesting areas. Not allowing these uses and enforcing the rules against these uses will get this site back to being a productive nesting site for both Piping Plover and Least Tern.

Response:

Comment noted. Refer to above response for information concerning protection of endangered and threatened species.

Comment:

The Long Island Divers Association supports the inclusion of SCUBA diving as an activity at the park. Exploration of the underwater conditions at the park might lead to some practical suggestions as to how access could be provided for a SCUBA diver.

Response:

Comment noted. The Long Island Divers Association can request a permit from the Long Island Region to dive at the park. However, at this time, the plan directs that access will be from the accessible parking area and drop-off near the shoreline. Divers will be able to drop off their equipment and park at the main parking area, walk back to the drop-off /accessible parking area and then walk their equipment down to the shore.

Comment:

Please do not allow swimming at the park and point out that there are many other opportunities for swimming in the North Fork area including Wildwood and Orient Beach State Parks.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment:

The use of bicycles (non-motorized) on designated paths should be permitted.

Response:

As noted in the plan, the soils of the park are very sandy and are not conducive to bicycling. The main road of the park (loop road) will be open to bicycling and bike racks will be available should patrons wish to visit the park by bike.

List of Persons / Organizations Providing Comments

Cynthia Acalyo
Bob Alteri
Cindy Benedetto
Amy Cirincione
Lorn Cirincione
Angela Chewy
Bernadette Deerkoski
James Del Rossi
Vito “Rocky” DeVal
Maureen Grippa
Paul Grippa
Paul Hoffman
Joseph Jannsen, Coastal Resources Manager, The Nature Conservancy
Vicky Johnson
Dawn Karlin
Jordan Kowskin
Nettie Liburt
Carol Losquadro
Sean Mahar, Audubon New York
Jay McKasty
Florence Pajeski
Samantha Perry
Beverly Prentice
Janice Rayber
Valerie Scopaz
John Sep. Vice-President & Conservation Chair, North Fork Audubon Society
Douglas Ian Shaw
James Slezak
Cathy Springer
Michael Tehan
Emily Toth
Vicky Toth
William Toth
Ken Vanseski
Sean Walter, Town Supervisor, Town of Riverhead